CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

Graduate Studies News

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From the Dean's Desk:

Apples and Oranges

At this very moment, the four Montréal Deans of Graduate Studies are in the process of deciding which nominated doctoral theses written in 1987 should be considered for the **prix d'excellence de l'académie des grands Montréalais** sponsored by the Chambre de commerce de Montréal.

The topics of the theses nominated at Concordia range from "Design and finite element analysis of switched reluctance motors" in electrical and computer engineering, "Buyer-Seller interaction: A script-theoretic framework" in business administration, "High-speed trains: A comparative study in national characteristics of design" in interdisciplinary studies, "Computer-aided synthesis of optimal multi-speed gear drive designs using problem-reduction strategy" in mechanical engineering, to "A simulation study and an operating system design for a multiprocessing system" in electrical and computer engineering.

A glance at these and similarly varied thesis topics shows that to choose "the best thesis" from a combined list of sixteen theses written at Concordia, McGill, Université de Montréal, Université du Québec à Montréal, or an affiliated school, is much like comparing **apples and oranges** and therefore a priori impossible. On the other hand, apples and oranges belong to the category of **fruit** with common properties such as sweetness and freshness and can be compared from broader points of view. It is obvious that a similar abstraction is required for the present competition.

What we are looking for in a Ph.D. thesis is the academic excellence of the work. This is manifested not only by a contribution to knowledge, but also by the success of the author in making the results of the thesis accessible to an educated public, and providing a perspective on the present and future relevance of the work. In addition, clarity, elegance, and stylistic quality are considered to be essential elements of a winning thesis.

The precise criteria on which the theses will be judged are the following: (1) The originality of the thesis; (2) The immediate impact of the results of the thesis on the specific discipline or disciplines in which the thesis was written; (3) The long term impact of the results of the thesis on the specific discipline or disciplines in which the thesis was written; (4) The impact of the results of the thesis on cognate disciplines; (5) The scientific, cultural, social, economic and historical value of the thesis, if applicable: (6) The value of the thesis as a model of clear thought and style of presentation.

Although the 1988 competition is of a pioneering nature and some of the details of evaluation may change, the basic theme and the motivation for the **prix d'excellence**, will undoubtedly remain unchanged in the years to come.

I therefore appeal to all of our current Ph.D. candidates to accept the challenge and produce a doctoral thesis that meets the broad and general criteria for academic excellence listed above. There will be only one winner, but there are and should be a large number of theses of winning calibre. To have a thesis nominated for a prize is

already an exceptional complement and a testimony to the outstanding merit of an academic venture.

M. E. Szabo

Diploma in Instructional Technology

Concordia's diploma in Instructional Technology is buried deep inside Canada's only integrated programmes in Educational Technology. Still, it is attracting a lot of attention. According to Richard Schmid, who has directed Ed Tech studies for the last three years and was recently named chair of the Education Department, the diploma is bringing in students from across Canada and around the world.

"Ed Tech and Instructional Technology are on the rise," says Schmid, noting there is a growing demand for trained instructors at all levels of government and business. Schmid says the so-called 'technological revolution', in which many organizations are re-tooling to accommodate new computer technologies, plays a big role in the increasing demand.

"Companies are still bootstrapping training... we work with companies in Montréal that admit to being five to ten years behind in training compared to what's going on in the United States right now," he says. "Canada has a lot of catching up to do in this field."

The Diploma in Instructional Technology aims at training students in the objectives and methods of teaching in a variety of environments using different kinds of teaching tools. Courses are offered in the educational use of television, video and computers along with other courses in the theory and practice of teaching. Students follow a 30 credit course with a 12 credit core curriculum. Most of the courses are cross-listed with courses in the master's programme, but the diploma options have a more practical orientation.

Maria Tovar, new program director, Diploma in Instructional Technology

'We try to identify generic teaching skills and develop them," says Schmid, explaining how the department attempts to deal with the diverse interest and needs of its students. He adds that since most courses are project-oriented, students are able to focus on areas that concern them the most.

Schmid says one of the programme's biggest draws is its studio facilities for production projects. The department has two television studios at its disposal, the ability to produce interactive video disks, sound production studios and numerous personal computers as well as links to the university computer. The educational applications of desktop publishing have become very popular with students recently, he says, now that computers are able to run complex graphic and layout programs.

Schmid adds that while most graduates have practical production skills, their studies focus on the concepts and design of educational packages.

"We are not trying to create producers. We are trying to produce people who can talk to a cameraman/woman on a studio floor and understand their needs."

The Diploma in Instructional Technology attracts a broad cross-section of students. Ages range from 20 to 60. Most are returning to school after spending time in the work force. Some are teachers and instructors who have come to upgrade their skills with new teaching methods and technologies. Others have been sent by their employers to learn how to develop training systems.

Almost all graduates of educational technology programmes go on to find work in their field – often before they have completed their degrees. This is especially true at the master's level, and it has a roundabout bearing on diploma students. As many as 50 per cent end up applying for the master's degree.

For further information on the Diploma in Instructional Technology, contact the Education Department at **(514) 848-2022**, or write care of Concordia University at 1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. West, Montréal, Quebec H3G 1M8, Canada.

Diploma in Computer Science

Unlike a number of Concordia's diploma programmes, the diploma in computer science is not geared toward professional training.

"The programme is not targeted to a particular type of job training," says Hon Li, diploma programme director. "We focus on fundamental education [in computer science]. The skills students learn here will be useful to them later on in either their career development or for their own pursuit of computer science... We are not trying

to answer the question, say – 'How would computer science be useful in accounting?' ...The goal of this training is to elevate the student's knowledge to a level that would enable them to continue graduate studies in computer sciences."

This is a very broad mandate for a diploma programme, and one that has proven to be very demanding. While the diploma is comprised of 34 credits – a mere four credits more than most students take in a single academic year – Li says most diploma students take 18 months to complete the programme.

The basic aim of the programme is to bring a student's knowledge of computer science to a level that is comparable with a B.A. graduate. For this reason, course work is very tightly controlled. Of the 34 credits only six are currently allowed as electives. Upon graduation, students are expected to have fundamental knowledge of a number of computer languages, programming techniques on many different types of computer systems, and a fundamental understanding of systems design and computing theory.

And the broad mandate of the programme is matched by the variety of students.

"We have all kinds of students, ranging from teachers to engineers.

Li says that most students, about half of whom come in from the job market, are pursuing the programme on their own. He feels, however, that industry and business should pay more attention to programmes like the diploma for staff training.

"I don't think I've seen too many examples of business and industry which send their employees to the programme. This is perhaps something that industry and the business community should consider more carefully."

The diploma programme grew out of the department's qualifying courses for the master's programme about five years ago.

"Before the diploma programme we had a qualifying programme for the master's degree. At some point we said 'There seems to be a demand for people who wish to continue in the master's programme, as well as for those who wish to go out in the job market. Maybe we can merge the two objectives into one as a diploma programme.' So at that point in time the Department of Computer Science created the programme."

In previous years, the demand for the programme was very high. Recently, however, enrollment has dropped off a little. But Li says he is not concerned with numbers. "Our concern is with quality not quantity. We do not wish to lower standards to maintain a quota."

For further information on the Diploma in Computer Science, contact Hon Li at **(514) 848-2030** or write care of Concordia University, 1455 de Maisonneuve Blvd. West, Montreal, Quebec H3G 1M8, Canada.

Diploma in Journalism

This summer the Journalism Department graduated the first class from its one year old diploma programme.

"Everybody came into the programme pretty well from scratch," says diploma director Enn Raudsepp with a certain amount of pride. "Now they are at a point where they are eligible and competent enough to work in any newsroom in the country."

The facts seem to bear out Raudsepp's claims. Of the twenty students who entered the programme last July, almost all have found jobs in print or broadcast media. Graduates can be found at the CBC, the Gazette and La Presse, as well as at a number of smaller papers in Ottawa and Montréal.

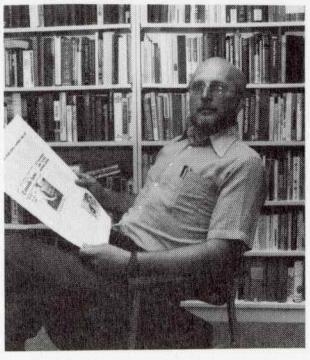
"If you ask me what the secret formula is, it's that we treat our students like journalists...like junior colleagues who need to be nurtured along," says Raudsepp.

According to Raudsepp, there is a small trend in the media these days towards hiring journalists with well-rounded educations. For example, the University of Western Ontario converted its undergraduate programme in Journalism into a one-year Master's programme. Carleton University in Ottawa offers a comparable graduate programme.

In the face of such competition, Raudsepp feels that Concordia's programme has two distinguishing features. The first, and perhaps most important, is the city of Montréal itself.

"We are very fortunate that Montréal is a big media city," he says, and that we are unique in Canada with five daily newspapers and two major outlets of the CBC. He also feels the French/English mix in the city provides some unique opportunities.

Enn Raudsepp, program director, Diploma in Journalism



"It provides a wider perspective on the function of the media. There are quite different practices... [For example] the editorial 'we' and the anonymous editorial are not as prevalent in the French media as it is in the English." With the language and cultural differences and a different festival cropping up every week throughout the summer, there is never a shortage of stories.

The other distinguishing feature of the programme, says Raudsepp, is its approach to teaching journalism.

"It's an intellectual process that we are teaching. It's not dependant on the equipment (the department is equipped to teach print, radio and television journalism), but rather on how well we can teach students to think. We consider questions such as, knowing what news is, what function news has in society and what consequences news has on society. We live in a complex society and information is the cornerstone. We have to question the information people talk about and where it comes from."

Students follow a 33 credit, ten month programme which begins early in the summer each year. While most of the courses have a practical bent, students are also expected to take courses in media ethics, law and some communication theory, as well as Canadian communications policy.

The programme also has a small built-in research component. Students are required to submit a 30-40 page research paper in the third term that deals with some aspect of communication theory or practice. Raudsepp says he hopes this component will bring an intellectual orientation to the study of journalism that is lacking in other programmes.

For further information on the Diploma in Journalism, please contact Enn Raudsepp at **(514) 848-2468** or write care of Concordia University at 7141 Sherbrooke Street West, Montréal, Quebec H4B 1R6, Canada.

Profile: PAUL THÉBERGE, Ph.D. in Communication

Music departments are not questioning technology; that's what threw me into communication studies," says Paul Théberge, explaining how he made the shift to Concordia's graduate communications programme from working as a composer.

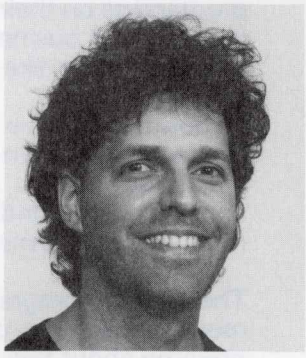
Théberge completed a B.A. in music at Dalhousie University in 1976. He spent the following eight years working at odd jobs composing. He has written pieces for NFB short documentaries and the CBC, and had his work performed in Canada and the United States. A few years ago, Radio Canada entered one of his pieces in the Prix Italia, an international broadcasting competition.

Théberge describes his music as "experimental/avant garde, the new stuff coming out of the classical tradition."

In 1984, Théberge entered the M.A. in Communication Studies at Concordia. His thesis analyzed the development of experimental music and pop music in the 1950s and 1960s, focusing on the role of technology in that development.

His doctoral work will look at the organizational relationships of sound production in modern recording studios. Théberge says he wants to examine the overall production environment, where "human relations are as much part of the technique as the technology."

Paul Théberge



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